

# Scott Spouses Newsletter

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## Becoming a Couple Again: How to Create a Shared Sense of Purpose After Deployment

Coming together as a couple after war deployment isn't always easy or something that happens naturally. It requires effort, and an understanding that each person has grown and changed during the separation. A positive way to think about this is that both of you, service person and spouse, have developed your own sense of purpose coping with new experiences while apart. What's important now is to come together and create a "shared sense of purpose", that is essential for your well being as a couple, that of your children and your life in the community. This won't happen overnight; it will take time, mutual compassion and a desire to do so. Here are four steps to help you create a "shared sense of purpose."

### STEP #1: Understand Each Other's Sense of Purpose During Separation

The returning service member's sense of purpose has been shaped by:

- Traumatic events that can be difficult to process and talk about.
- Identification and closeness with their military unit and comrades who have shared similar experiences.
- Regimentation in the form of highly structured and efficient routines.
- Heightened sensory experiences including sights, sounds and smells.
- Expanded self-importance and identity shaped by war.

The spouse's sense of purpose has been shaped by:

- *New roles and responsibilities.* Many spouses have assumed new or more taxing employment, oversight of finances and child rearing.
- *Community support trade-offs.* Some

spouses and children left the military base to stay with parents and in-laws for various reasons, but will have experienced loss of connection with their military community, its familiarity and support.

- *Emotional changes.* Some spouses may have experienced growing independence and thrived on it; others may have found this a difficult time leading to depression, anxiety, increased alcohol or substance use and abuse, and other symptoms of stress.

### STEP #2: Recognize that the following concerns upon return are common, often shared or felt indirectly, and will require mutual adjustments and time:

- *Home.* Life at home does not have the edge and adrenaline associated with wartime duty, which often leads to let down, disappointment and difficulty shifting gears.
- *Children.* Reconnecting with one's children is an anticipated event by service member and spouse. Children react differently depending upon their age, and can be shy, angry, or jealous as new bonds are reestablished. Discipline will now be shared, often resulting in conflicting opinions and styles.
- *Relationship.* Concern about having grown apart, growing close again without giving up individual growth and viewpoints, issues of fidelity, and being able to discuss these issues without raising more anxiety or anger challenge many couples.
- *Public.* While there has been widespread support of the service mem-

ber, the public has mixed views of the war. Protracted deployment and an upcoming election may polarize the public, promoting media coverage that can undermine the pride and purpose military families feel about their involvement.

### STEP #3: Relationship Breakers: Most couples argue about three things: sex, money and children.

Understanding the potential of these issues to divide rather than unite is key to reestablishing a shared sense of purpose. These issues involve:

- *Intimacy.* Intimacy is a combination of emotional and physical togetherness. It is not easily reestablished after stressful separations creating an emotional disconnect. Partners may also experience high or low sexual interest causing disappointment, friction or a sense of rejection. In due time, this may pass, but present concerns may include hoping one is still loved, dealing with rumors or concern about faithfulness, concern about medications that can affect desire and performance, and expected fatigue and alterations in sleep cycles.
- *Finances.* During the deployment, most service members and families received additional income from tax breaks and combat duty pay, as much as \$1,000 extra/month. Some families may have been able to set aside appreciable savings; other families may have spent some or all of the money on justifiable expenses and adjusted family budgets. This may create disagreement that can hamper



## Becoming a Couple Again, continued from page one

the important work of building *shared trust* and financial planning as a couple essential to moving forward.

- **Children.** Children have grown and changed during deployment. Some returning soldiers will see children for the first time. It is important to build upon the positive changes in your children, and work as a couple to address issues of concern that need improvement or attention. Discipline of children will now be shared and should be viewed as something that can be built together rather than criticized or ignored.

### Step #4: Relationship Makers. Here are some thoughts and tips for building a shared sense of purpose and stronger family.

- **Expectations.** Remember that fatigue, confusion and worry, common during this transition, often lead to short tempers. In that frame of mind, it is easy to revert to the relationship breaker issues listed above. If this happens, suggest taking time out and return to discussions when both parties feel more relaxed.
- **Enjoy life.** Find and do activities that are pleasurable such as a movie, a family picnic, bowling or shopping. Create time in your weekly schedule to do something as a couple, as a family, and one-on-one activity that is shared between returning service member and his/her child or children.
- **Give thanks.** Together, thank those people, family, friends, co-workers and new service member buddies who have helped you and your family during this deployment. Showing appreciation through writing notes

together, calling people or visiting them will bring a sense of fulfillment that reunites each other's experiences.

- **Communicate.** Talking together builds a shared sense of purpose. Desire to communicate is more important than details. Service members often prefer to discuss war stories with military buddies to protect their spouse and family from traumatic memories. Spouses should not be offended. Other ways to communicate involve physical activity. Take walks, work out together or engage in a sport. Healthy communication involves processing feelings, new information and relieving stress. Read, draw, paint, dance, sing, play an instrument, volunteer at church or in the community to keep a sense of perspective and individuality as you grow together as a couple.
- **Let time be your friend.** Time may not mend everything, but it is often one of the most important factors in healing and solving problems.
- **Be positive.** A positive attitude is one of the most important gifts you can bring to each other and your family during this time. Appreciating what one has gives strength and energy to a family and a couple. Special circumstances such as physical injury and psychological problems are not addressed in this fact sheet, and require additional support, information and resources.
- **Know when to seek help.** Both service member and spouse have endured a level of stress, uncertainty, worry and loneliness that can affect one's health and mental health. If either spouse or service member suspects

they may be suffering from a health or mental health problem, it is essential to seek help. Many service members do not want to seek help for mental health problems from the military for fear of damaging their career. However, the consequences of letting a problem linger untreated can be much more damaging. There are excellent treatments including medications that can help people reclaim their lives and enjoy their families, as they should. You owe it to yourself and your family to be in good health.

We hope this fact sheet is helpful and something you will hold onto and refer to in the months ahead. Service members and spouses should feel proud of the important contributions both have made to our nation. Now it is time to reunite with loved ones and enjoy a shared sense of purpose and togetherness.



*COURAGE TO CARE is a new health promotion campaign of Uniformed Services University. Its purpose is twofold: to provide quality health information reflecting our University's excellence in military medicine and to present it in a friendly, appealing format for immediate distribution for the health promotion needs in your community. Find more information online at <http://www.usuhs.mil/psy/courage.html>.*

## Free Care Package Shipping Materials for Families of Deployed

The United States Postal Service (USPS) is offering free packing materials to spouses and families of military members who are deployed overseas. To take advantage of this service, call 1-800-610-8734. Press 1 to hear the menu options in English then press 3 to speak with an opera-



tor. USPS will send you free boxes, packing materials, tape, and mailing labels. These products are to be used to mail care packages only.

Other free packing materials are always offered to the general public. Visit the following USPS website for more informa-

tion about available sizes and quantities of Priority Mail Supplies.

[http://shop.usps.com/cgi-bin/vsbv/postal\\_store\\_non\\_ssl/display\\_products/productCategory.jsp?cat=Business+Use&prodCat=/Shipping+Supplies/Business+Use/2.+Priority+Mail](http://shop.usps.com/cgi-bin/vsbv/postal_store_non_ssl/display_products/productCategory.jsp?cat=Business+Use&prodCat=/Shipping+Supplies/Business+Use/2.+Priority+Mail)

# Behavioral Health Consultation Service Can Ease Deployment Stress

A Behavioral Health Consultant (BHC) is a psychologist or a social worker specially trained to work as a member of your primary care team. This team approach allows us to consider physical, behavioral, and emotional aspects of health. For example, the BHC can help you develop plans for smoking cessation or other lifestyle changes. They can also help you with emotional or behavioral problems such as difficulties with your family or relationship, grief, excess stress, depression, anxiety, or anger.

## What is the Behavioral Health Consultation Service? Who is a Behavioral Health Consultant? How can he or she help me?

We're making the Behavioral Health Consultation Service available to you in our primary care and family practice clinics, as part of your comprehensive health care. The service offers help

when stress, worry, or emotional concerns about physical or other life problems interferes with your daily life.

## How is this service different from Mental Health?

The BHC simply adds another facet to your complete health care. You are seen directly in the primary care or family practice clinic, and the BHC *will not* provide traditional psychotherapy. If you request it, or the BHC thinks you would benefit from it, he or she will refer you to specialty mental-health services. Another difference from specialty mental-health care is that your BHC will document the assessment and recommendations in your outpatient medical record. *He or she will not keep a separate mental-health record.*

## What should I expect when I see the BHC?

Your BHC will ask you specific

questions about your physical symptoms, the emotional concerns you are experiencing, your behaviors, and how all of these might be related. Communications with your BHC may not be entirely confidential. Your BHC will make every effort to protect your privacy. But, like *all providers*, they *must* report information from any active duty patient that could have a negative impact on our mission.

Your appointments should last no longer than about 30 minutes. Your BHC will provide brief, solution-focused skills and techniques. You can also expect to be seen in this clinic and for the BHC to have a close working relationship with your primary medical provider. Remember: Your primary provider is in charge of your health care. The BHC's main job is to help develop and implement the best-integrated healthcare plan for YOU!

# Watch Me Grow Craft Helps Keep Families Connected

How do you keep a deployed spouse/parent involved in your children's lives while they are away? Veteran military mom Charlotte Packard shared an idea that kept her family connected through many long deployments. Her "Watch Me Grow" craft involves tracing



around your child's hand every week.

On each finger, write something new that your child has learned, a fun thing that he/she said, or an accomplishment achieved. The finished product can be kept in a book to share during reunion or mailed weekly for morale. This illustrates to the deployed parent how much his/her child has grown and

also helps them feel connected to home. Not only will the deployed parents continue to feel part of their child(ren)'s special moments, the children will also look forward to the ritual.

*Information courtesy of the Family Readiness Bulletin for Families and Friends of the 94th Reservists.*

# Airmen's Attic Now Open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and First Saturdays

The Airmen's Attic is a non-profit organization that allows active duty members, ranks E-1 through (**now**) E-5, and their dependents to receive household goods and clothing free of charge. These items do not cost money, but rather are assigned value units by category. For example, each member/family is entitled to one bag of clothing per day. Additional monthly limits are:

Furniture/Appliances	4 items/year
Clothes, uniforms, shoes	1 bag/day
Household items	8 items/day
Baby items	Varies
Brand new items	Varies

Shopping at the Airmen's Attic is easy! Simply fill out a form (name, rank, telephone number, squadron/unit) the first time you visit. Weekly/annual allotments are annotated when you check out. Go often since the merchandise is always changing!

The Airmen's Attic survives solely on donations and volunteers. It is currently accepting military uniforms and fall and winter clothes for adults as well as for children up to size 8. Furniture pieces and small and large appliances are always in high demand. Non-perishable items such as laundry and

cleaning products, disposable diapers, etc. are also needed. Donations are accepted every Tuesday and Thursday from 8:30-11:30 am and the first Saturday of each month from 9:00 am-12:00 noon.

**Shopping hours are every Tuesday and Thursday from 9:00-11:00 am as well as the first Saturday of every month from 9:00 am-12:00 noon.**

The Airmen's Attic is located in building 4141 (near the mobile home park and behind the Thrift Shop). For more information, or to volunteer, please call 256-3840.



## Deadlines for Holiday Mailing

The U.S. Postal Service has released the 2004 holiday recommended mailing dates for those wanting to send packages from the United States to forces in the Middle East.

Different dates have been set for the various mailing options and mail destined for military members with deployed units, which have APO addresses starting with 093.

For mail going to APO and FPO addresses:

- Packages sent parcel post—Nov 13
- Space-available mail—Nov 27
- Parcel airlift—Dec 4
- Priority mail, first class cards and letters—Dec 11; for APO addresses beginning with 093—Dec 6
- Express mail—Dec 20.

There is a 70-pound limit for outgoing and incoming APO and FPO mail.

The U.S. Postal Service also recommends that all mail carry the servicemember's full name, with or without rank, military organization or unit, and full APO or FPO address, but **should not indicate the deployed country's name in any part of the address.**

*From the 20 Oct 2004 Stars and Stripes online, available at <http://estripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=24989>.*

## Free Bowling at Stars & Strikes



Families of deployed military members can bowl one free game on base each week. In order for the bowling center to track participation efficiently, family members should come together rather than individually. Participants must show deployment orders to be eligible. For more information, please contact the Stars & Strikes bowling center at 256-4054.

## Helpful Websites



**Defend America: U.S. Department of Defense News About the War on Terrorism**  
<http://www.defendamerica.mil/>

This official DoD website was launched just after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks to keep the public informed about efforts by the U.S. and its coalition partners to combat global terrorism. The site offers the latest news, photographs, transcripts and other information about the U.S.-led war on terrorism. It highlights the words and activities of key U.S., Defense Department and coalition officials related to terrorism, in addition to daily news reports and photographs by U.S. military photojournalists on the frontlines as well as in supporting units.

**Military.com: All the Benefits of Service**  
<http://www.military.com/>

Military.com helps members make the most of military experience, enhance access to benefits, get ahead in their careers, find transition support, enjoy military discounts, and stay connected for life to friends or mentors from the service. It strives to offer unsurpassed services to a community that deserves nothing less. Features include:

- Buddy Finder & Community Center
- Military-Friendly Schools, Scholarships & GI Bill Center
- Scholarship Database
- Veteran Job Board
- Military Mentor Network
- Military Finance & VA Loan Center
- Benefits Directory
- Military News
- Insider's Guide to Joining the Military
- Military Trivia Contest
- Discount Center

## Expeditionary Family Event Calendar for November 2004

Date	Event & Time	Location	Phone
4	<b>Turkey Trot Dinner at the Chapel, 5:00 pm-7:00 pm</b>	<b>Chapel 2</b>	<b>256-8668</b>
9	Enlisted Spouses' Club Meeting, 7:00 pm	Hospital Dining Hall (basement)	233-4690
10	Tobacco Cessation Class (first of 6 meetings), 11:00 am	Hospital Dining Hall (sponsored by HAWC)	256-7316
10	Officers' Spouses' Club Meeting, 10:30 am	Scott Club	746-4033
18	<i>The Great American Smokeout®</i> , all day	Nationwide quit smoking campaign	256-7316
18	College Bound Program, 6:30 pm	Base Library (reservations required)	256-5100
18	Key Spouse Meeting, 6:00 pm	Family Support Center	256-8668
19	<b>EAF Parents Night Out, 6:00 pm-10:00 pm</b>	<b>Family Support Center</b>	<b>256-8668</b>
19	Give Parents a Break, 6:00 pm-10:00 pm	Child Development Center & Youth Center	256-8668
25	<b>Thanksgiving Dinner, 3:00 pm</b>	<b>Nightingale Inn Dining Facility (near dorms)</b>	<b>256-8668</b>

Note: Events in bold are specifically Expeditionary Family Events

This newsletter is a product of the Scott AFB Integrated Delivery System (IDS) Team.  
Find more helpful information online at <http://public.scott.amc.af.mil/review/integrated/index.cfm>.